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September 9, 1999

Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman  
14<sup>th</sup> Street and Independence Avenue  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary

This letter is to urge you to lead the way now in developing policies and programs to deal with an extremely urgent national and global issue – genetic engineering of **agricultural** products.

The matter is complex and I'm sure you are far better informed than I, but I will try to describe my understanding of the issue.

Discoveries in genetic science over the past 50 years have greatly broadened scientific knowledge of fundamental biological processes, but the field is in its infancy. Scientists' knowledge is extremely limited in contrast to the vast areas of ignorance.

Nevertheless, stimulated by court decisions which allow patenting of discovered genes and related biotech products, and attracted by potentially huge profit opportunities, large global companies are funding research, rapidly developing technologies and patenting products based on this very limited scientific understanding.

Agriculture in the U.S and in a few other countries has already been significantly affected by these developments. It is impossible to know whether the long-range effects of these unprecedented changes in agricultural technology will be beneficial or disastrous. It is clear that there are great risks involved. These risks include further destabilization of the planet's biological systems on which human life depends.

Without some means of slowing the headlong rush generated by expectation of huge profits, the risk of ecological disaster will become even greater. Certainly you, as Secretary of Agriculture, have a unique responsibility in this situation. It is my impression that present policies and programs are dangerously inadequate to deal with the risks inherent in development, marketing and use of genetically modified organisms, based on current scientific knowledge.

Labeling of food products containing genetically-modified plant material is an essential and minimal first step. It, and much more, is urgently needed. I hope you will very soon take a strong stand on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

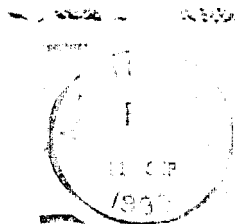


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